

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
MARCH 25, 2008

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. Board members present were Chair Jason Hurley, Vice-Chair Jacque Daniels, Greg Hoover, Julie Aitken and Councilmember Starkey. Also present were Parks and Recreation Director Dennis Andresky, Programs Manager Phillip Holste and Board Secretary Jenevia Edwards recording the meeting.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Numbering or Naming of Equestrian Trails

A lengthy discussion ensued concerning this issue with the concern being that when individuals were injured on trails, they were unable to provide specific directions to EMS workers. Mr. Holste provided maps to the Board of the trails and commented that the maps needed to be updated. A number of suggestions were made as to how to create a more efficient system. Councilmember Starkey commented that police officers would have to be educated as to how to use the maps. She explained that giving a police officer a general street location would work better than giving them a number. Councilmember Starkey was not in favor of adding mark points because it would create an additional expense. Ms. Aitken explained that if every section trail was named or numbered on a trail map, there would be no need for signage and the maps could be made available to the public. Chair Hurley commented that the trails should be named and the maps made readily available on the home page of the Town's website because many residents were confused about how to acquire the trail map.

Ms. Aitken indicated that the issue was one of safety because EMS workers were unable to locate victims promptly. Chair Hurley commented that when an accident occurred a Park Ranger was called to provide directions.

Discussion continued regarding the issue with Boardmembers making a number of suggestions about making adjustments to the trail maps. Councilmember Starkey suggested that working with the Open Space Advisory Committee on the trail issue would make it easier. Ms. Aitken commented that the idea was not to rename the trails.

Ms. Aitken made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Daniels, that the Agricultural Advisory Board undertake to make adjustments to the trail maps to make them more efficient. She suggested having a joint meeting with the Open Space Advisory Committee to review the maps. In a voice vote, all voted in favor **(Motion carried 5-0)**

Councilmember Starkey suggested presenting the issue to Fire Chief Joe Montopoli, and Town Administrator Gary Shimun to get their feedback in light of recent issues.

Chair Hurley suggested that each Boardmember check the Town's website, review the map and present their ideas at the next meeting. Mr. Holste indicated that the maps were already on the Town's website and he suggested that the best solution to the problem was to use the same name. Ms. Aitken reiterated that the idea was not to change the names but to add more direction.

2.2 Battens Property

Earlier in the meeting, Mr. Holste presented recent aerial pictures of Battens Farm. He explained that some of the information was provided to the Land Preservation Advisory Board when the Town made its presentation and specifically highlighted the multi-use trail that ran perpendicular to the Battens site. Mr. Holste advised that the discussion at the March 24, 2008 Open Space Advisory Committee meeting was that the east/west trail parallel to the Florida Power and Light easement that ran through the east side of the Town was the only area of the Battens property to which the Town had access to the trail. He indicated that the map would give an idea of what was being considered for the Batten's site, whether to place a trail on the northern property line or on the southern property line and work in an east/west path to connect Sunny Lakes, Silver Lakes, Battens and Wolf Lake.

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Ms. Aitken asked if Florida Power and Light and Aucamp's Nursery had been approached to find out if they would allow the Town to make the connection in that area. Mr. Holste advised that FPL had been approached by the Town to secure a portion of the easement; however, FPL indicated that the Town would have to purchase the entire easement or nothing at all. He added that the idea for the culvert crossing had to be discussed further and it was possible that the Town might have to create its own culvert crossing from the Battens site. Mr. Holste indicated that this would be explored later because the definitive location of the trails had not yet been decided.

Chair Hurley asked if FPL had specific objection to the Town using their culvert. In responding, Mr. Holste stated that FPL was approached specifically concerning the easement because it made more sense to acquire the 30 or 40 feet of easement from them since it was a straight line from east to west. Ms. Aitken asked if it meant the Town had to purchase all 20 acres with Mr. Holste responding that it would be the entire easement from 58th to Wolf Lake which would be too costly. Councilmember Starkey stated that Mr. Aucamp currently held the lease for that property and he had already begun improvement on his property. She added that Mr. Aucamp had spoken to Town officials on the issue. Mr. Holste advised that no specific agreement had been made concerning the culvert, however, FPL and Mr. Aucamp would have to agree on that issue. He added that the main focus was locating a path, and multiple property owners would have to be contacted with regard to purchasing easements from them.

Discussion continued regarding the purchase contract on the property, and the existence of arsenic contamination. Mr. Holste stated that Mr. Batten was working with Broward County on a plan of action to have the site cleaned and once there was a "no further action status," the Town would close on the property. He advised that the purchase price was \$3.8 million and the Town would be receiving \$2 million from the County which would be presented at closing. Mr. Holste spoke of proposed amenities that were included in the land preservation application and the County's flexibility with their interlocal agreement which indicated that the site had to be kept in passive recreational use. He referred to the idea for a farmer's market at the site and stated that this would be an acceptable practice for the site.

Mr. Hoover questioned if passive meant that the store would no longer operate as a ~~dairy~~ farm. Mr. Holste responded in the negative explaining that the property would be owned by the Town and no decision had been made as to use of the property. Mr. Hoover questioned if anyone had shown interest in leasing the property and maintaining it the way it was remembered. Mr. Holste explained that the Town had no discussions about what was intended for the site after closing; however, how the property would be used depended on the Councilmember and feedback from community meetings by residents. Vice-Chair Daniels thought that Mr. Hoover's questions related to the building rather than the entire site. Mr. Holste stated that in the application to the County, the Town stated that the building would remain and the application was not predicated on the building being demolished.

Discussion continued regarding the future use of the building. Mr. Holste reiterated that no specific decision had been made by Council and the main focus was on the arsenic cleanup and the closing.

In discussing the presentation to the County, Mr. Andresky stated that the presentation indicated that the site could be used periodically as a farmers' market type activity and not a fulltime running store. Ms. Aitken questioned if stall space in the building could be rented by local growers, with Mr. Andresky responding in the negative. Mr. Andresky explained that the idea was for community growers coming to the site on a Saturday to sell their produce to the general public. Mr. Holste indicated that this would be similar to what was being carried out by Special Projects at the Bergeron Rodeo Grounds. He explained that the farmers market idea was a part of the amenities provided to the Land Preservation Advisory Board as part of the application process provided to the Board, and in an interlocal agreement, proposed development of the site, farmers market was not mentioned; however, a final management plan for the property had not been completed by the Town, but that could be included later on if the Town so chose. Mr. Holste commented that the farmer's market would be held bi-weekly or bi-monthly.

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Councilmember Starkey advised that she had presented to Council the fact that this Board supported a farmer's market and they would be able to lease the site and have the activities such as a farmer's market continue. She commented that the idea was not to have the building go into disrepair, which was common of a number of properties acquired by the Town. Councilmember Starkey commented that the Land Preservation Advisory Board was interested in seeing the property continue its operation as a landmark farm in the area. She explained that if the property could be kept in operation it could be leased to a number of farming groups because many people were looking for a fresh market. Councilmember Starkey indicated that the Land Preservation Advisory Board was interested in having the site continue as a landmark farm and hoped that it could be preserved by the Town.

Chair Hurley questioned if the Town's position with the County would prohibit the County from allowing anyone to lease the property and operate the site in a similar manner until the Town was ready to move forward. Mr. Holste stated that a lease agreement would have to be presented to the County. Chair Hurley asked if the County would be willing to entertain a lease, with Mr. Holste commenting that he had not had discussion with the Land Preservation Administrator about the issue as the focus had been on purchasing the property and closing.

Mr. Andresky explained that one of the Land Preservation Advisory Board members had the sentiment to try keep Battens as an operating farm, and based on the management plan that had been submitted for the use of the site, if the Town supported that plan it would be worth pursuing. Mr. Holste commented that the County wanted an assurance that the Town would derive some benefit from the project and that it was not used as a profit maker for a private enterprise.

Mr. Andresky explained that because of the history of the site, this was a unique opportunity that could be used as farming plots, community farming or quarterly farmers market that would be open to the public. Ms. Aitken suggested that the site be used as a co-op of growers that who shared the lease. Mr. Andresky responded that if the County was not interested then Ms. Aitken's suggestion was a good possibility for the site.

Councilmember Starkey advised that discussions at the March 24th Open Space Advisory Committee meeting indicated that with the present fiscal constraints, the Town might not be able to develop the park amenities that were envisioned for some of the open space parcel that it planned to acquire. She suggested that it might be more feasible to lease the site and place horses or cattle there or continue to sub-lease the site. Councilmember Starkey commented that since Battens Farm was located in District 2, Councilmember Crowley had been invited to attend an Agricultural Advisory Board meeting to discuss his vision for the site. She believed that it would take a while before funding or grant funding could be acquired for any construction of the site. Ms. Aitken stated that Councilmember Crowley had communicated to her that he was interested in meeting with the Board but he would wait until after the closing so as not jeopardize the process.

Councilmember Starkey questioned if the arsenic cleanup was part of the negotiation. Mr. Holste advised that Mr. Batten was given the option to have the Town clean up the site if he deposited an environmental escrow of \$800,000 which was triple the cost of the estimated clean up. He indicated that Mr. Batten had decided to handle the clean up himself.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the arsenic issue with Ms. Aitken questioning where the arsenic came from. Mr. Holste responded that the environmentalist did not identify the source of the arsenic. Councilmember Starkey commented that there was arsenic on the Math Iglar site. She explained that the arsenic contamination was typical of any farming sites or any open space sites that the Town acquired. Councilmember Starkey added that the County had a map that identified polluted areas within the Town and the County Water Advisory Board was concerned about the surface management of water.

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3. OLD BUSINESS

Chair Hurley advised that he left a message for Mr. Shimun on the outstanding issues being discussed by the Board; however, to date he had not received a response.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Councilmember Starkey spoke of the evaluation of all the Boards by Council, and advised that one of the Boards wanted to sunset itself and Council agreed. She commented that with all the environmental and water issues, it did not make sense to her. Councilmember Starkey spoke about cutbacks and the cost to the Town for staff to attend meetings for monitoring and transcribing minutes. She cited certain similarities between this Board and the Open Space Advisory Committee, including the bond issue and commented that with the ideas from both boards on the utilization of the funds, she believed that both boards merging would be a good idea. She commented that Council had not been very supportive of her suggestion and she did not receive the consensus that she had expected. Councilmember Starkey stated that she was not trying to eliminate the Board, but she wanted to make it more efficient.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the open space bond, trail connectivity and the preservation of the Town's rural lifestyle. Councilmember Starkey spoke of the accomplishment of this Board and in commending the members, she stated that the issues would probably surface in the future and this Board could work independently and bring the issues back to sub-committees. She added that she would like to see the Open Space Advisory Committee meet every month, and with the tasks that they presently had, she would like to see this Board merged with them to see if the activities could be tackled jointly. Councilmember Starkey explained that the idea to merge both Boards was welcomed unanimously by the Open Space Advisory Committee members at the meeting that she had attended. She asked for the opinion of this Board on both Boards merging.

Ms. Aitken stated that if the Open Space Advisory Committee had too large an agenda, how did it make sense for both Boards to merge. She spoke on a number of issues that had been presented by this Board such as the carcass ordinance, the livestock identification and the agricultural definitions which were needed and had not been addressed by Council. Ms. Aitken expressed the opinion that although there were issues that might overlap with Open Space Advisory Committee, other issues were still unique to this Board that Open Space Advisory Committee would not be able to spend the time or have the interest to be involved with. Councilmember Starkey agreed that on some of the issues that was true. She indicated that there was no staff liaison for this Board to push the items ahead; however, Urban Forester Tim Lee and Assistant Town Engineer Michael Mungal were liaisons for the Open Space Advisory Committee.

Mr. Holste recalled that Open Space Advisory Committee was not trying to merge with this Board, but rather they wanted to have monthly meetings instead of bi-monthly meetings. He indicated that a typical meeting lasted two hours and forty-five minutes and they wanted to reduce that.

Councilmember Starkey explained that having a staff liaison from the Development Services Department was needed to make the process for this Board work; however, the Town could not afford to have them attend meetings all the time. She added that there was frustration with the disconnect on many of the Boards, and with the new administration, staff had not been allowed to interact with Council as much as in previous administrations which created frustration all around. Councilmember Starkey reiterated that with a staff liaison, and with the Boards working together many of the issues would be accomplished. She highlighted the farm park as one of the issues that could be resolved. Councilmember Starkey expressed the opinion that more could be achieved with both boards working together.

Chair Hurley stated that the issue of the boards merging was discussed a year ago and Open Space Advisory Board felt that it did not want to tackle the issues that this board was dealing with, and felt that their agenda was too thick with the bond issue being eminent. He expressed surprise that Open Space Advisory Committee met bi-monthly when this Board had met bi-weekly when working on issues such as the zoning in progress. Vice-Chair Daniels questioned why the Open Space Advisory Committee met bi-

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monthly with Councilmember Starkey advising that it was Council's decision as a cutback measure. Councilmember Starkey felt that there should be a better way to record minutes with the Board doing the recording and submitting it with the with the new recording system. She commented that it came back to having a liaison to move the issues forward. Ms. Aitken commented that a staff liaison was not needed if the Board wrote and submitted letters to the individual Councilmembers and lobbied the issues that were not moving forward. She stated that any Councilmember could place an item on the Council agenda if they wished to do so, and the idea was to bypass any roadblock and address Councilmembers directly in a letter, naming the issues that the Board would like to put forward. Ms. Aitken commented that Council may not even be aware of the issues. Councilmember Starkey responded that anyone who read the minutes would be aware of the issues.

Ms. Aitken stated that as a member of this Board, there were a number of issues still outstanding that were agricultural and she would like to Board to remain as it was for the time being. She commented that any of the Boardmembers would be willing to records the minutes. Chair Hurley asked if it was Town policy that all the minutes be transcribed or could the digital recording be archived. Councilmember Starkey responded that according to Sunshine Law, minutes of motions and highlights had to be recorded.

Vice-Chair Daniels made a motion, seconded by Ms. Aitken, that the merging of the two Boards be placed on the next meeting's agenda for consideration and discussion. In a voice vote, all voted in favor. **(Motion carried 5-0)**

5. AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Following a brief discussion, the following items were suggested for the April meeting:

- Possible Merging of Open Space Advisory Committee and Agricultural Advisory Board
- Numbering or naming of equestrian trails

6. COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS

There were no comments and/or suggestions made.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no objections and no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Date Approved

Chair/Board Member